

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4, 6-11, and 14-18 are pending in the present application. Claims 2, 3, 5, 12 and 13 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein; and claims 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 14-18 are amended by the present Response.

As an initial matter, Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter with regard to claims 5-11 and 14-18, as stated at page 3 of the outstanding Office Action. In accordance with the comments noted in the outstanding Office Action, independent claim 1 is amended to recite features substantially similar to dependent claims 2, 3 and 5; claims 14 and 17 have been rewritten into independent form to include substantially all of the subject matter of the claims from which they formerly depended; and claims 2, 3, 5, 12 and 13 are accordingly canceled.

In addition, claims 4, 6 and 8 are amended to correctly the dependency thereof in view of the amendments to independent claim 1 and the cancellation of claims 2, 3 and 5; and claims 1, 4, 6, 8-11 and 14-18 are amended to correct minor informalities, to better conform to standard claim drafting practice, and not to recite "means-plus-function" terminology in view of 35 USC § 112, sixth paragraph. Furthermore, the specification is also amended merely to correct a minor reference numeral error. It is believed no new matter is added by these amendments to the claims and the specification.

Accordingly, no further issues are believed to remain outstanding with regard to amended independent claims 1, 14 and 17, or the claims dependent therefrom; therefore, it is respectfully requested that amended independent claims 1, 14 and 17, and each of the claims depending therefrom, pass to issue.

CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present Response and allowance of the present application and all of the pending claims therein are respectfully requested and are now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

P23949.A04

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
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